THE MINISTER OF DISINVESTMENT (SHRI ARUN SHOURIE): (a) The Government has disinvested 51% of its holding in BALCO to Sterlite Industries (India) Ltd. on 2nd March, 2001.

(b) to (e) As informed by the company, applications under VRS of 706 employees of BALCO were pending at the time of disinvestment. VRS has been given in five half-yearly instalments along with the interest at the rate of 7% per annum, on the future four instalments, after deducting applicable tax at source. Under the instalment scheme gratuity amount is paid in full along with the first instalment. *Ex-gratia* amount due together with notice pay, leave salary etc. less all outstanding loans and accrued interest etc. is divided in five instalments. Loan is also deducted in five instalments and not in the first instalment.

Pakistan's irk over Indian help to Afghanistan

5020. MISS MABEL REBELLO:

SHRI B. J. PANDA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether US has warned India to go slow on re-construction and development plans in Afghanistan as it irks Pakistan; and

(b) the details of the healing touch re-construction or development works carried out or in the offing of the country, in Afghanistan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH) : (a) India is in touch with several countries, including the US, with regard to international efforts aimed at Afghan reconstruction in the political, economic and security sectors. India's contribution has been appreciated by the government and the people of Afghanistan, and other international donors. US had, at one stage, conveyed concern of Pakistan at the reopening of our Consulates General at Kandahar and Jalalabad. It is generally recognized that such concerns have no legitimacy.

(b) India has provided extensive humanitarian, project and financial assistance to Afghanistan. Government had announced a financial commitment of US$ 100 million for reconstruction of Afghanistan. Out of this grant, a sum of US$ 10 million was transferred into the account of the Afghan government as budget subsidy in July 2002. Some of the major areas of our project assistance include the fields of Education, Health, Civil Aviation (3 aircrafts have been gifted), Public Transport (274 buses have been provided), culture & media, institution building (through training in various fields, so far nearly 500 Afghan officials have been trained at Indian institutions), information technology, security & rule of law, judiciary, banking, urban development and agriculture.

India had announced food assistance of 1 million tons of wheat to Afghanistan. A part of this assistance (85517 tons of wheat) has been converted into high protein biscuits (9526 tons) and has been sent to Afghanistan for its school feeding programme.

During the visit of President of Afghanistan, H.E. Mr. Hamid Karzai to India in March this year, Prime Minister had announced a financial commitment of US$ 70 million, over and above the already available grant of US$ 100 million, for the construction of Zaranj-Delaram road. India and Afghanistan had also signed a Preferential Trading Agreement during the visit.

Japan's opposition on transfer of nuclear technology to North Korea

5021. SHRI RUMANDLA RAAMACHANDRAYYA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether sharing India's concerns, Japan has opposed the transfer of nuclear and missile technology by Pakistan to North Korea;

(b) if so, whether Japan has clearly pointed out that it would affect Tokyo's relations with Islamabad;

(c) whether Japan is also in agreement with the US for imposing sanctions against North Korea for development of atomic weapons; and

(d) if so, whether a number of countries have also joined together to condemn North Korea?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH) : (a) and (b) In an interview given to the Hindu on 2-1-03, Japanese Foreign Minister Kawaguchi answering a question on Japan's view on reports that Pakistan may have played a critical role in promoting North Korea's programme of developing nuclear weapon said, "North Korean nuclear weapon programme is a grave concern for the security of Japan. This programme also directly affects the peace and stability of (the) international community and (the) nuclear non-proliferation regime (as well). From this point of view, we are naturally concerned with a report related to North Korea's nuclear weapon programme." Further on during the course of the interview she added, "as for the reports that Pakistan cooperated with North Korea on the North's nuclear weapons programme, we are naturally concerned with a (relevant) report related to North Korea's nuclear weapon programme. We will continue to observe this issue closely".

(c) As of now there are no reports indicating that Japan is in favour of imposing sanctions on Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea (DPRK).